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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART V. SOUTH WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Section 11 - Central Asian Republics

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03198

V.11 Central Asian Republics

Area Overview

1. This section covers UNHCR activities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Characteristics of the refugee population and others of concern to UNHCR

2. An estimated total of 605,000 persons were forced to flee their homes because of the civil war in Tajikistan. The majority of them originated from southern Tajikistan. Most of them escaped to various regions within Tajikistan or chose to resettle in their ancestral places of origin in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Some 60,000 people sought refuge in the autonomous province of Gorno Badakhshan. Between 10,000 and 16,000 persons fled to Turkmenistan, while another 60,000 sought refuge in Afghanistan in December of 1992.

3. Some 420,000 refugees and internally displaced persons were identified in early 1993 and started to benefit from UNHCR's programme of assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Central Asia, which covers Tajikistan and the neighbouring states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The majority of the displaced Tajiks are of rural background and worked in kolkhozes (collective farms) prior to being displaced.

4. The Afghan refugees in the Central Asian Republics are of mixed background. While most of them are of rural background, others come from the major towns and cities, including Kabul. The figures given below are based on estimates reviewed by UNHCR in collaboration with the relevant government authorities and may differ from those reported earlier.

Tajikistan

5. At 31 December 1993, a total of 500,000 persons, comprising internally displaced persons, returnees and the local population in the areas of return in the Khatlon province of southern Tajikistan, were assisted by UNHCR. Some 25,000 internally displaced persons still remained in Gorno Badakhshan.

6. Although no comprehensive survey has been undertaken, statistics concerning returnees from Afghanistan indicate that approximately 75 per cent of the returnees are women and children. No data is yet available on the number of vulnerable persons.

7. Of the known Tajik returnee children from northern Afghanistan, 30 per cent were aged 0 to 4 and 70 percent were aged 5 to 18. The only study undertaken of age distribution among returnees showed a distribution among males and females of different age groups similar to the national distribution.

8. At 31 December 1993, there were some 300 Afghan refugees, who are mainly adult males. By 31 May 1994, the number had increased to a total of 334 recognized refugees, of whom 270 were located in Dushanbe.

Kyrgyzstan

9. At 31 December 1993, there were some 6,000 Tajik refugees of Kyrgyz origin who had sought asylum in late 1992 and early 1993. They are unlikely to return to their areas of habitual residence and are gradually integrating locally. They fled with their entire families. On average, there were four to five children per family.

Kazakhstan

10. At 31 December 1993, Kazakhstan hosted a refugee population of some 3,000 Tajik refugees of Kazakh origin who have also fled the civil war in Tajikistan and found refuge in southern part of the country where they are beginning to integrate into the local communities. In addition, there were some 2,000 Afghans residing in Kazakhstan at the end of December 1993.

Uzbekistan

11. A growing number of Afghans of concern to UNHCR in Uzbekistan are unable to return to Afghanistan due to instability or their past political affiliations. While earlier reports indicated some 1,000 Afghans living in Uzbekistan, current estimates range from 5,000 to 8,000. UNHCR is currently assessing their numbers. Several thousand Afghans may therefore need UNHCR protection and assistance in 1994. An undetermined number of Tajik refugees for whom local integration is not possible may need repatriation assistance in 1994.

Turkmenistan

12. There were an estimated 15,000 Tajik refugees at 31 December 1993. Most of them arrived in late 1992, and several hundred of them are willing to repatriate. They will need assistance to facilitate their transport back to their areas of habitual residence in Tajikistan.

13. The breakdown of internally displaced persons in Tajikistan, Tajik and Afghan refugees in the Central Asian Republics and returnees from Afghanistan is given below.

Tajik returnees from northern Afghanistan:

Country of Origin	Number 31/12/93	Per cent M/F/C	Location	Type of Assistance
Tajikistan			Khatlon province	Emergency Assistance
	3,455	25/18/57	Kumsangir	"
	1,337	24/18/58	Kolkhozobad	"
	2,949	na	Shaartuz	"
	5,746	na	Kabodion	"
	585	23/22/55	Jilikul	"
	720	na	Vakhsh	"
	311	na	Bokhtar	"
	521	na	Others	"
Total	15,624			

Statistics of populations of concern to UNHCR as of 31 December 1993:

Country of asylum	Country of origin	Ref/(IDPs) assist.	Ref/(IDPs) non assist.	Total
Kazakhstan	Afghanistan	0	2,000	2,000
Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	0	3,000	3,000
Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	3,500	2,500	6,000
(Tajikistan)	Tajikistan	500,000	105,000	605,000
Tajikistan	Afghanistan	300	0	300
Turkmenistan	Tajikistan	0	15,000	15,000
Uzbekistan	Afghanistan	0	5,000	5,000

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

14. The Inter-Tajik Talks between the Government of Tajikistan and the opposition which were initiated by the Russian Federation and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy are likely to have a direct impact on the rate of return of those Tajiks still in northern Afghanistan. During the first round of talks that took place in Moscow in March 1994, both the Government and the opposition considered the safe and early return of Tajik refugees from Afghanistan to be a crucial factor towards the resolution of their conflict. The future of the refugees in northern Afghanistan and UNHCR's efforts for their voluntary repatriation are thus closely linked to and dependent on the success of the political process and peacemaking initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General. Several rounds of talks have been planned for 1994, with the second round taking place in Tehran in June 1994. UNHCR was requested by both parties and the United Nations to participate in a sub-committee on refugees which was created during the first round of negotiations in Moscow.

15. Following an overall improvement in the security situation in Tajikistan during the course of 1993 and in the first quarter of 1994, the situation became more tense in April and May 1994, with UNHCR staff members in Dushanbe being directly threatened. In the southern part of the country, the security of the UNHCR Field Officers remains stable, though security measures have been stepped up in view of the events in northern Afghanistan.

Programme objectives and priorities

16. The overall UNHCR objective is to complete the programme of assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Central Asia by the end of 1994, and at the same time to initiate the process of handing over its activities to the competent United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during the course of 1994. It is hoped that the United Nations agencies and NGOs can become operational and effective during the first half of 1995. This would allow UNHCR to commence the process of scaling down its presence, in order to be able to withdraw from the Central Asian Republics by end of 1995.

Return of internally displaced persons

17. UNHCR's objective is to facilitate the smooth reintegration of the internally displaced persons who choose to return to their districts and villages of origin. The target is that most of the remaining internally displaced persons will have returned by the end of 1994, and that no sizeable return movements will thus take place in 1995.

18. To allow for a successful reintegration, UNHCR aims at providing a package of building materials to the beneficiaries to enable them to complete the rebuilding of the 17,000 houses which were destroyed during the civil war, and at assisting them in setting up micro-projects. It is expected that by the end of 1994, and provided the required funds are made available by the donor community, all the 17,000 houses will have been reconstructed.

19. None of the previously planned micro-projects were implemented in 1993 due to lack of financial resources. The implementation of these projects in 1994 will also depend largely on the response of the international community to a joint United Nations appeal, which was first launched in January 1993. UNHCR needs were subsequently updated, following which a separate and more specific version covering UNHCR requirements was issued in March 1994.

20. Upgrading of water supply and sanitation will continue on a limited scale until similar activities are initiated by other competent United Nations agencies and NGOs. To this end, several NGOs have shown interest in implementing projects related to water and sanitation and it is expected that some of these activities will be initiated during the second half of 1994, subject to funds being made available by UNHCR.

21. UNHCR Field Officers have expressed concern regarding the food and nutritional situation. UNHCR has therefore proposed to the World Food Programme (WFP) that a joint WFP/UNHCR food and nutrition assessment mission be undertaken in the southern part of Tajikistan where the large majority of the caseload is located and is in need of food assistance.

Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan

22. The more time it takes for the Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan to repatriate, the more the deteriorating economic situation in Tajikistan will make it more difficult for them to reintegrate. UNHCR is concerned that the conditions generally favourable to voluntary repatriation prevailing today may not last indefinitely, especially since any delay in the return of the Tajik refugees from Afghanistan could be construed by the local Tajik communities and the authorities as an indication of the refugees' involvement in the atrocities committed prior to their departure and during the border conflict with Afghanistan. Considering the above factors, and given that the security situation in Afghanistan is very unsafe, UNHCR will continue to facilitate and assist in the voluntary repatriation of the Tajik refugees, in order to attain the objective of early reintegration upon their return.

23. In early 1994, it was expected that the majority of the remaining 18,000 refugees in Sakhi camp in Afghanistan would have opted for voluntary repatriation. In Kunduz, relations are being renewed between UNHCR and the local authorities, although continuing military activities there makes it

impossible to ensure a permanent UNHCR presence and implement assistance activities for the refugees there. It is, however, anticipated that out of an estimated caseload of 15,000 persons in Kunduz, several thousand Tajik refugees may choose to repatriate in 1994. It is thus planned that some 80 per cent of the total 1993 refugee caseload will have returned to Tajikistan from Afghanistan before the end of 1994. By mid-1995, this level is expected to reach 90 per cent.

24. The Tajik returnees from Afghanistan will benefit from the same assistance and protection from UNHCR as the internally displaced persons.

Tajik refugees in other countries of asylum

25. The refugees in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan seem unlikely to return to their areas of habitual residence in Tajikistan and have already started to integrate in their respective countries of asylum. UNHCR's objective is to continue to assist the local authorities in integrating these refugees and to complete most of the activities by the end of 1994. A limited programme of assistance may have to be continued in 1995 for any refugees identified as being vulnerable.

Afghan refugees

26. A growing number of Afghan refugees in the Central Asian Republics will need to be assisted on an individual basis, until such time as a durable solution can be found for them.

Programme delivery and administrative support costs

27. Delays in the implementation of UNHCR activities resulting from a lack of resources, coupled with logistical difficulties, have led to a postponement of both the phasing down of the assistance activities and the planned reduction of staff and closure of Field Offices. This will now be undertaken during the course of 1994 and in 1995, with the objective of achieving a complete UNHCR withdrawal from the Central Asian Republics by December 1995.

28. In view of the prevailing situation, it is planned to improve the security of UNHCR staff and offices in Dushanbe and in the field.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

29. Most of the assistance activities are directly implemented by UNHCR's Field Offices, with support of staff seconded from the Norwegian Refugee Council during 1993 and early part of 1994. The Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare are the government counterparts of UNHCR in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) Belgium carries out limited water, sanitation and health activities. Subject to the availability of funds, Oxfam and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) will be partially financed to implement training and rehabilitation activities in the water and sanitation sectors, until such time as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is able to assume the lead role in these sectors. It is planned that basic food supplies for a caseload of 500,000 persons in southern Tajikistan will be mobilized in 1994 through WFP as a complement to the rations given by the Government. A per capita food ration of 175 g per person per day, consisting of cereals (150 g), cooking oil (15 g) and sugar (10 g), is to be distributed. The number of

beneficiaries in 1995 who will receive food assistance has not yet been determined in view of the uncertainty of the future of the programme. The Aga Khan Foundation is undertaking relief activities, especially food distribution, in the autonomous province of Gorno Badakhshan. Additional NGOs have expressed interest in carrying out medium- to long-term activities in Tajikistan, with their own funds, during the second half of 1994. These activities will focus on the rehabilitation of the water and sanitation systems. Activities aimed at strengthening local production capacity of roofing tiles are also planned to be initiated in late 1994.

General Programmes

Emergency Fund

30. An amount of $ 2,337,000 was drawn from the 1993 Emergency Fund to cover costs related to international procurement of building materials.

Special Programmes

Other Trust Funds

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

Tajik returnees

31. Tajik refugees in Afghanistan started to return spontaneously in February 1993. Organized repatriation with UNHCR assistance however, began only in April 1993. Some 16,000 persons repatriated during 1993, while between January and April 1994, some 7,000 repatriated, mostly through Gorno Badakhshan.

32. Lack of adequate funding compelled UNHCR to review its originally planned reconstruction programme, which was revised downwards from a planned number of 12,000 houses to be rebuilt to 7,000. This latter figure includes an in-kind Swedish donation of timber for 1,000 houses valued at $ 828,402, as well as for the reconstruction of another 1,000 houses to be undertaken by the Tajik authorities, for which $ 485,500 were made available by UNHCR. However, various factors ranging from changes in national currencies in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, new national financial regulations, and logistical problems, further delayed the procurement and receipt of building materials. By the end of 1993, only some 1,800 houses had been reconstructed with materials procured and delivered by UNHCR.

33. For similar reasons, and due to lack of adequate funds, UNHCR had to discontinue all planned micro-projects that were foreseen to assist returnee affected communities to resume a normal socio-economic life.

34. Against a total projected need of $ 19.5 million in 1993, some $ 11.6 million were received in contributions in the same year. These contributions included a loan of $ 3 million from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which has now been rescheduled to be reimbursed during the course of 1994.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

35. An estimated 25,000 Tajik refugees currently still in Afghanistan and approximately 20,000 internally displaced persons at present in the autonomous province of Gorno Badakhshan may choose to return to southern Tajikistan in 1994. Activities related to their reintegration, together with the provision of assistance to those who have already returned, but have not yet benefited from the distribution of building materials, will continue throughout 1994.

36. By the end of April 1994, roofing materials for 3,600 houses had been distributed. Out of the planned total of 1,000 houses scheduled to be reconstructed in 1993 by the Tajik authorities with funds provided by UNHCR, only 200 houses were reconstructed with government procured materials.

37. UNHCR fielded a two-week procurement mission to Siberia, Russian Federation, in April 1994 to identify the reasons for the long delays in the dispatch and receipt of timber, and the failure of the contracted company to deliver according to specifications. As a result of this mission, timber is now arriving more regularly and meets the right specifications. New orders of timber are being made from other timber companies in order to be able to complete the construction of the required number of houses.

38. In April 1994, UNHCR decided to reduce the number of roofing sheets per house, in view of difficulties faced in the supply line. Due to the lack of producers of large roofing sheets in the region, UNHCR had to contract several companies in the neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is planned to identify more suppliers in order to achieve the 1994 objective for the reconstruction of houses.

39. In view of limited financial resources, UNHCR only implements limited water and sanitation activities and some micro-projects, such as the distribution of vegetable and maize seeds to the most vulnerable returnees. However, other acutely required projects such as rehabilitation of water systems, special assistance for returnee women and children, and income-generating projects remain unfunded, and their implementation and financing by other international agencies and NGOs will thus need to be examined.

40. The most vulnerable Afghan refugees in the Dushanbe and Khodjant area are provided with limited financial assistance from UNHCR, on a quarterly basis.

41. In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR is supporting the Government's efforts to integrate the Tajik refugee population, which has expressed the desire to settle there permanently, by providing them with one-time financial assistance to enable them to rehabilitate houses allocated to them by the Government. The level of assistance depends on the size of the family, the average being $ 150 per family. UNHCR assistance for this caseload will be terminated by the end of 1994. Although a similar type of assistance had been planned for the Tajik refugees in Kazakhstan, lack of funding prevented its implementation.

42. A survey is being carried out by UNHCR to determine the exact number and profile of the Afghan refugees/asylum-seekers who are residing in Uzbekistan, in order to determine the type and level of assistance required for them. However, owing to lack of legislation and national instruments to deal with refugees,

they are still mostly regarded as illegal aliens by local authorities and are therefore denied access to medical care, education or employment opportunities. Their presence continues to be tolerated by the authorities, although they are increasingly harassed by local militias and occasionally threatened with refoulement.

43. In Turkmenistan, UNHCR is planning to assist Tajik refugees who have expressed their wish to return to Tajikistan through the partial financing of their transport costs, as and when required.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Local settlement

44. UNHCR plans to complete its material assistance by the end of 1994. Should contributions reach UNHCR late in the year, some of the reconstruction activities may need to be further postponed for implementation during the first half of 1995 in order to complete the reintegration process, including the completion of the houses remaining from the original planned number of 17,000 houses.

45. Thus, in 1995, UNHCR plans only to maintain a minimal presence to carry out its mandate responsabilities in favour of Afghan refugees and to assist the local and central authorities in ensuring the security of the returnees. This humanitarian and protection monitoring function is likely to be needed in the medium term. In this regard, UNHCR will seek to collaborate with other agencies such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the Centre for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF and the World Bank, so that both human rights monitoring and related assistance activities carried out by UNHCR can be handed over to these agencies in 1995.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

46. The emergency operation in the Central Asian Republics commenced in early 1993, at which time there were no established posts. Missions were fielded by staff from Headquarters or other locations on a rotational basis. Salaries and common staff costs of the international staff on mission and that of locally hired staff were therefore charged to temporary assistance. In addition, consultants were hired, whose daily subsistence allowance, consultants' fees and travel also had to be met.

47. In November 1993, UNHCR opened an Office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and a main office in Tashkent with a logistics base in Termez, Uzbekistan. As there were no NGOs or governmental bodies who could implement this labour-intensive assistance and protection monitoring programme on behalf of UNHCR, four Field Offices were subsequently opened in Kolkhozabad, Shaartuz and Dusti in southern Tajikistan, and Chorog in eastern Tajikistan.

48. In Dushanbe, Tajikistan, five international posts, including the Chief of Mission, Senior Programme Officer, Administrative/Finance Officer, Protection Officer, Logistics Officer and 22 local posts were created in addition to nine Field Officer posts and 19 local posts in the field. In Tashkent, Uzbekistan,

three international posts, including that of Chief of Mission, Programme/Administration Officer, and Protection Officer, as well as four local posts were created, in addition to a Logistics Officer post in Termez, Uzbekistan. In Osh, Kyrgystan, one Field Officer and one driver post were created. All these posts were created as from 1 December 1993 until either 30 June 1994 or 31 December 1994, to be funded under Special Programmes.

49. Owing to the lack of communication links in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, UNHCR had to install a SATCOM (satellite communication) as a result of which expenditure for communication was high, though within budgeted limits. This chapter also covered the rental costs for running the office from a hotel, as no other commercial accommodation or government premises were made available. Expenditure was also incurred for the purchase of office equipment, electronic data processing equipment, electric heaters and other furniture and equipment. In Termez, Uzbekistan, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) provided UNHCR with office premises and logistical and administrative support, for which UNHCR contributed an amount of $ 7,300 per month.

50. Total expenditure in 1993 was, in general, lower than expected due to the delayed commencement of programme activities.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

51. The revised 1994 budget for the Central Asian Republics had to be entirely reviewed during the first quarter of the year as it was clear that the delays incurred in the reconstruction of 17,000 houses would not enable UNHCR to scale down its presence in the field by mid-1994 as originally planned.

52. After a more detailed assessment of the operation and following a recent Headquarters mission to Central Asia, several additional local posts were created. These included posts for a Logistics Assistant and an Administrative/Secretary in Tashkent, two Drivers and an Administrative/Finance Assistant in Termez, as well as a Field Assistant in Osh, Kyrgystan. These posts were created effective 1 July 1994 until either 30 June 1995 or 31 December 1995.

53. In Tajikistan, out of the international and local posts created in 1993, five Field Officer posts were extended until 31 December 1994. Four Field Officer posts were extended until 30 June 1995 and five other international posts in Dushanbe were extended until 31 December 1995. In addition, out of 41 local posts, 36 were extended until either 30 June 1995 or 31 December 1995. In Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan, all posts were extended until 31 December 1995.

54. As of June 1994, UNHCR's presence in Tajikistan comprised 55 persons, including 14 international staff. The total revised 1994 costs under salaries and common staff costs are therefore higher than the initial estimate.

55. As the Central Asian Republics were recognized as having extremely difficult working conditions, including staff insecurity and physical isolation, these duty locations were categorized as non-family mission areas. Furthermore, due to the poor, if not non-existent educational and health facilities and the unavailability of basic supplies, special measures for the mandatory absence for the relief of stress and procurement missions for the purchase of personal

supplies were established, whereby international staff could undertake rotational/periodical missions to Ankara and Istanbul, respectively, to meet their personal needs. These new administrative measures, which were established for all existing and newly-recruited staff involved in UNHCR's activities in the Central Asian Republics, came into effect in February 1994.

56. Needs under most of the other budget chapters have also been revised upwards as the structure of the office was finally established in early 1994. Needs under staff travel and general operating expenses have increased as missions have to be undertaken to distant field locations and UNHCR has to provide for the maintenance for 20 office vehicles, an expensive proposition in the Central Asian Republics as all spare parts have to be imported. Provision for the acquisition of sophisticated telecommunications equipment has also been included in the revised requirements, in view of the security situation and extreme isolation of the field officers, located far from Dushanbe.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

57. Assuming that the reintegration and reconstruction activities will be implemented in accordance with the present objectives and revised time-frame, and/or that new NGOs will assist in the implementation of the programme, reductions in staffing are envisaged during the course of the first half of 1995. It is anticipated that one international staff member for each Field Office will be adequate as of January 1995 until the end of the first half of 1995. The Field Offices will subsequently be closed. In 1995, out of the 14 international posts in Tajikistan, only five will be maintained during the second half of 1995 until the end of the year, to monitor the security of the returnees, following which it is anticipated UNHCR will be able to withdraw completely from the Central Asian Republics.

58. UNHCR Offices in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will continue to operate until the end of 1995 to support UNHCR's activities in Tajikistan and implement assistance projects and protection activities for the refugees in these countries.

59. Following the operational plan to withdraw progressively from Central Asian Republics by the end of 1995, it is expected that the total initial 1995 estimate will be reduced by one third, compared to the 1994 revised budget. Reductions are foreseen under all budget chapters, except under general operating expenses, in view of higher costs related to the planned closure of all the UNHCR Offices in Central Asia by the end of the year.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
2,337.0	–	–	EMERGENCY FUND	–
2,337.0	0.0	0.0	SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	0.0
2,337.0	**0.0**	**0.0**	**TOTAL (1)**	**0.0**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
11045.9	3,000.0	10,970.0	OTHER TRUST FUNDS Assistance to returnees and displaced persons	3,900.0
–	–	3,153.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	2,155.5
–	–	587.5	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	421.0
11,045.9	**3,000.0**	**14,710.7**	**TOTAL (2)**	**6,476.5**
13,382.9	**3,000.0**	**14,710.7**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**6,476.5**